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CONTENTS OF THIS NUMBER.

| | PAGE |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Anglo-Arab Furniture..... | 170 |
| Application of Ornament, The (Four Ills.)..... | By Louis F. Day 176 |
| An Interview with Mrs. Edmund Russell..... | By W. R. Bradshaw 181 |
| An Ideal Guest Chamber..... | By Carrie May Ashton 185 |
| Answers to Correspondents..... | By Mrs. Putnam 187 |
| Art-Tradcs Supplement, The..... | 190 |
| Brass Balls and Rings..... | By Jean Kate Ludlow 186 |
| Decorative Chart for the Den of Cottage..... | By The Boston Designing Co. 163 |
| Decorative Chart for Renaissance Dining-Room..... | By Manly N. Cutter 173 |
| Design for Embroidered Scarf..... | By Harry Dean 187 |
| Designs for Screens..... | By Helen Hyde 186 |
| Editorials..... | 160 |
| How to Decorate a \$1.100 Cottage—III..... | By Cosmos 162 |
| Hard Problem to Solve, A..... | By Virginia Shortridge 171 |
| How to Make a Design for a Body Brussels Carpet, (Two Ills.)..... | 174 |
| Illustrations of French Silks..... | 164 |
| Illustrations of Arabian Furnishings and Anglo-Arab Furniture..... | 170-172 |
| Illustrations of Celtic Ornament..... | By Richard Q. Lane 160 |
| Illustrations of Vases, (Flambes)..... | By M. M. Hachette & Co. 183 |
| Illustrations of Stereo-Relief Ceilings..... | 189 |
| Louis Seize Drawing-Room, A, Prize Design..... | By J. W. Bliss 161 |
| Literary Notices..... | 191 |
| Notes on Furniture and Decorative Materials in Paris, (Four Ills.)..... | By C. R. King 178 |
| Prize Competition in Interior Decoration..... | 159 |
| Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Russell..... | 181 |
| Pottery and Glass at Collamore's..... | By Maud Haywood 183 |
| Suggestions to Those Who Would Furnish. Illustrations of a Modern Hall, Drawing-Room, Parlor, Library, Music-Room and Bed-Room..... | By Paine's Furniture Co. 165-169 |
| Stereo-Relief Decoration..... | 188 |
| Screens and Screen Making..... | 186 |
| Window Dressing in Paris..... | 162 |

PRIZE COMPETITION IN INTERIOR DECORATION.

MESSRS. JOSEPH P. McHUGH & CO., Interior Architects and Decorators, New York, with the view of encouraging the study of interior decoration after pure styles, offer six subjects for competition in THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER. The competition began with the October, 1890, issue, which also commenced the seventeenth volume of our journal. A prize of TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS will be paid by the above firm, for the best original design in the following special styles of ornamental construction and decorative treatment:

LIST OF SUBJECTS FOR COMPETITION.

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| October, 1890, | - | A COLONIAL RECEPTION ROOM. |
| | | Prize awarded to James Thomson, of Boston. |
| December, " | - | AN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE DINING ROOM. |
| | | Prize awarded to J. W. Bliss, Providence, R. I. |
| February, 1891, | - | A LOUIS SEIZE DRAWING ROOM. |
| | | Prize awarded to J. W. Bliss, Providence, R. I. |
| April, " | - | A ROMANESQUE HALL. |
| June, " | - | AN ADAMS LIBRARY. |
| August, " | - | A LOUIS QUINZE BOUDOIR. |

CONDITIONS.

1.—Each competitive design, in perspective, must be 15 inches by 10 in size. The drawing must be executed by the pen in black ink, and sent us flat, not rolled up.

2.—Working charts, drawn to a scale, may be sent in lieu of a perspective drawing. The size of the charts should be about the size of our page, say 10 x 8 inches.

3.—Each drawing must be original, and should include suggestions for wall decoration, draperies and furniture, after the style of its period, but adapted to modern construction and requirements.

4.—Each drawing must be signed with a *nom de plume*, and accompanied by a letter giving the real name and address of the designer. All designs must be addressed to the Editor of THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, 150 Nassau Street, New York, and must reach the office not later than the 10th of the month previous to that for which the competition is announced; thus, drawings for the April, 1891, competition should reach the Editor not later than the 10th of March 1891.

5.—A committee of decorative artists will decide as to which design is entitled to the prize in each competition, as well as those entitled to honorable mention, and their decision will be final.

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

THE history of Art clearly shows that, as civilization advanced, more ability to use the means of ornamental expression was developed, and that, as mere inventive or geometric design was found to be insufficient, Nature was more generally resorted to for suggestions and ideas, in order to add to pre-existing forms new features, which would lend to them new interest. This we find was done in such a way that the new elements harmonized with the old. The natural representations, though based upon the imitative principle were not merely pictorial copies, but modifications, or, as we say, conventional renderings. Now it is the union of these two principles, the inventive and the imitative, that has developed all the great styles of Ornamental Art; and this greatness is due to the nice balance of these principles. When, in the history of Art, the balance is disturbed—that is to say, when either principle predominates—then we get decay. When the constructive or inventive principle is too pronounced, the style becomes unsatisfying, cold and primitive; while, if the imitative and realistic principles become paramount, the style suffers, ending in certain decadence. Therefore in using natural forms in Decorative Art the decorator must be on his guard against running into mere pictorial representations, because forms so rendered will not harmonize with the older decorative lines and figures he may be called upon to use in conjunction with them.

MR. EDMUND RUSSELL, Lecturer on Decorative Art and apostle of the beautiful both in personal attire and in domestic environment, left New York on the 30th January, on a lecturing tour throughout the country. In an interview with Mr. Russell prior to his departure, he stated that his mission was more to inform people as to the principles of decorative art by means of which they could assert their own individuality in their ordinary surroundings, than to dictate how they must furnish, or what they must do, as such dictations interfere with that individuality whose claims he advocates. When one considers the vast amount of abortive decoration and showy, but unmeaning furnishings, in which there is neither rhythm nor harmony, it must be admitted that Mr. Russell has addressed himself to a Herculean task. American interiors are simply bric-a-brac museums, whose effect depends more on the quantity of the furnishings than on their decorative quality. The narrow hallways in our houses are choked up with heavy portières that are only suitable for the rooms of a palace, and on entering an apartment, one stumbles up against a diminutive tea table, and in trying to avoid tumbling over it, he knocks down the piano lamp. Rooms present more the appearance of being mere store rooms of furniture than the expression of individual aesthetic tastes. What our rooms most require is a toning down of their loud colors, and an arrangement of furniture such as will give the feeling that the various articles in the room, as well as the wall decorations, are simply the background to the people themselves. Our western people as a rule have no art education. They simply address themselves, on a foundation of a very little artistic education, to realize one or more given styles, about the spirit or sentiment of which they know absolutely nothing.

"At a reception I once gave in London," said Mr. Russell, "several Hindoo Princes were in attendance, and they seemed vastly surprised at the vast amount of attention cultivated people in London were giving to decorative art. 'In our country' said the son of a Rajah, 'we do not think anything about decorative art. Art with us is a spontaneous instinct that develops itself after the fashion of a flower. We do not study its development from a scientific standpoint. Our work is a spontaneous growth, developed from the intuition of the artist, and we are no more surprised at its existence than we are at the existence of the flowers. If a gentleman like you would come to India and tell us what a great interest you western people have in Hindoo art it would be a most astonishing thing to our people, and many would travel hundreds of miles for the curiosity of hearing a stranger giving himself so much trouble as to praise the work of our artists, about which they think so little themselves.'"

"This," said Mr. Russell "shows you the different way eastern people look at the subject of art in general. The western mind is more concerned with the outside of the subject, and is forever elaborating schemes that are only the counterfeit resemblance of decorative art, which fail because they are not the outcome of those qualities of mind, which are alone the true source of all art. True art is unconscious of itself and it is the third rate artist who boasts the loudest of his achievement."

ON the opposite page we present our readers with the prize design in our third competition. The subject is a Louis Seize Drawing-Room and Mr. J. W. Bliss, of Providence, R. I., is again the winner of the prize.

This most aristocratic and elegant mode of interior decoration, which forms the subject of our competition, lends itself admirably to a room in which the gaities and frivolities of our indoor life are mostly displayed, and forms a charming and consistent environment for the beautiful conceits the French are so adept in producing. Vases, clocks, statuettes, and *objets d'art*, gilded mirrors and white and gold-framed pictures of pastoral scenes, or salons of pleasure, silk and satin upholstery, French vernis Martin decorations, the chaste brass-work of Gouthière, the cabinet work of Risnier, are the magnificent details associated with the style known as Louis XVI.

In the hands of the French, the heavy, substantial and sumptuous beauty of the Renaissance has been translated with a lighter, gayer expression in their decorative arts. With such a grand style as a foundation, the French have played with and fondled its details with all their finer touch and inventive skill, feeling their way slowly through the massive, tortuous, magnificent lines of Louis Quatorze, and the marvelously twisted and turned volutions of the Louis Quinze, until, being surfeited with the exuberance of their own conceptions, there came the reaction, and the Louis Seize was born.

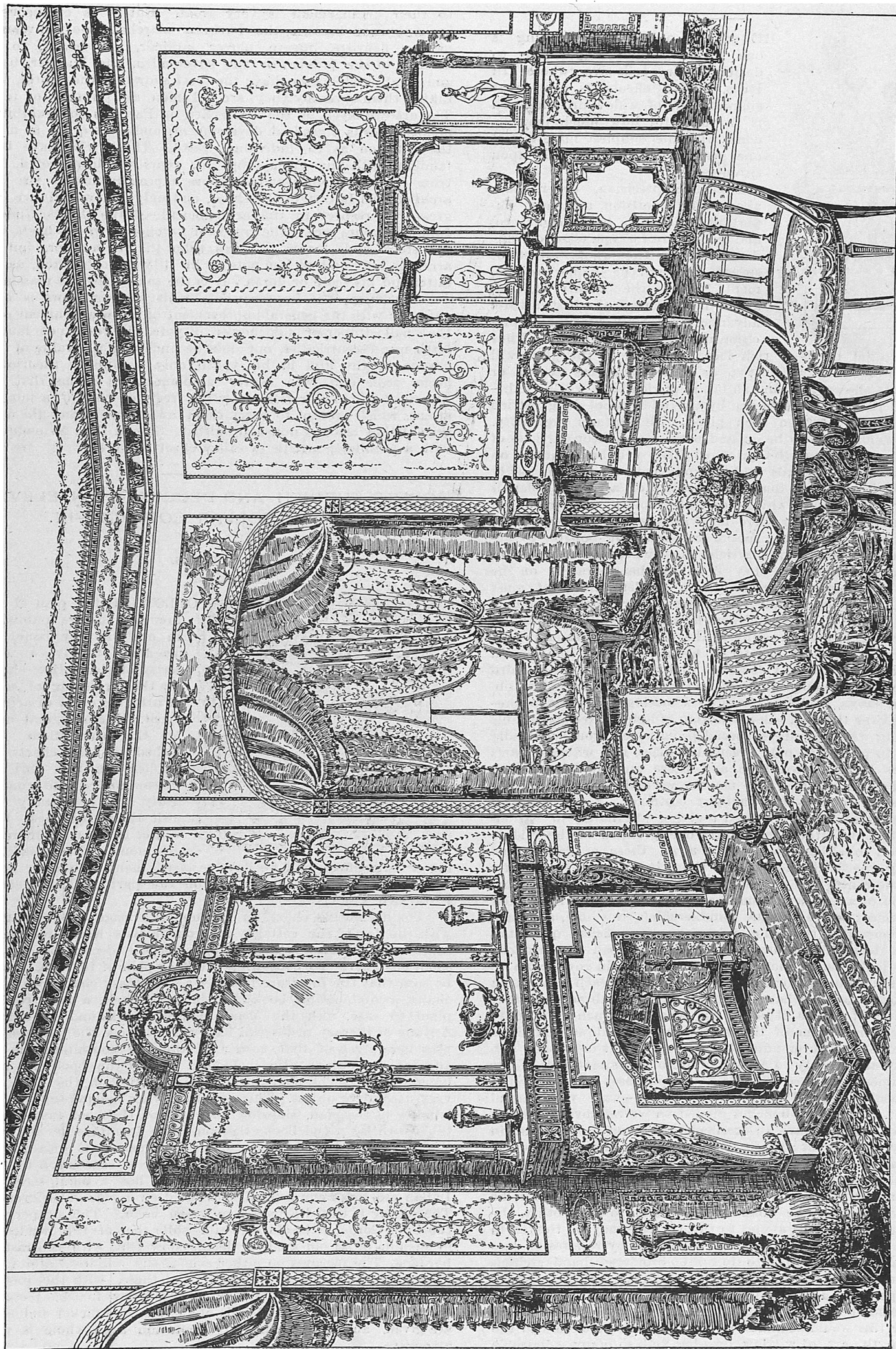
The Rococo emphasizes the position the gay nation was assuming in the world of industrial and decorative art, and its growth, in wealth, power and genius. The riotous gaities and insane pursuit of pleasure created the style of Louis XVI as the ultimate limit of exquisite refinement and fertility, the true reflection of the people with whom it found life and development. The Louis Seize is justly appreciated, and always will be so long as a love for beautiful furnishings exists. The delicacy of its colors, the beauty of its cleverly suggestive details, the simple and honest construction, the variety of the materials that enter into its composition, and the fact that there are but a very few styles that possess the qualities and associations that engage our interests and sympathies, makes it popular amongst people of refinement and culture, and give it an influence that will always be felt in interior decoration and furnishing.

The form of the drawing-room design by Mr. Bliss is quite similar to the prize dining-room in our second competition, but the arrangement of the prominent features shown has been altered. The end of the room we illustrate has an elaborate mantelpiece and mirror in old ivory and gold, and the fireplace fittings in brass and silver combination. The walls at either side are turned out at each corner and open into two small bays arched and hung with old rose draperies in brocaded silk. The walls are divided into panels of pale old rose with arabesques and scroll work, trophies of rural and musical instruments, tied with ribbons and garlands of flowers in various colors, both pale and bright. The flat plain surfaces, or stiling around the panels may be in old ivory and the mouldings of the walls and cornice to be in old ivory, gold and deeper tones of rose, and other subordinate colors similar to those used in the arabesques; pale blues, yellows and greens, as well as deeper and brighter tones to emphasize the mouldings and relieve the decorations from a too negative effect.

The color of the carpet should be borrowed from those of the walls and hangings, judiciously selected, and the furniture and upholstery is to be of brocaded silk, or figured satin. The cabinet could be of mahogany, with inlaid panels of ivory and fancy woods, or metal and decorated with ormolu, and the same could be applied to the tables and chairs, or the latter may be of old ivory and gold, the same to be used in the table or other pieces not shown in the drawing.

In the selection of the materials for the furniture and soft goods of a Louis XVI drawing-room there is considerable latitude, which should be used with great judgment and discrimination. White and old ivory, gold in combination with white or old ivory, or by itself, brass, silver, bronze, crystal, rosewood, amboyna wood, mahogany, ebony, lacquer wood, satinwood, inlay work in ivory, shells, shell metals, painting on wood, porcelain and glass, silks, satins, velours, velvets, plush, painted or woven tapestries and many other materials can be used with perfect propriety, but all must be treated with the most absolute delicacy and a just appreciation of the style.

We are indebted to Mr. Bliss for the foregoing description of his admirable design, and that gentleman is to be congratulated for his skill as a designer of interior furnishings as well as his wide knowledge of what is correct style.



—LOUIS XVI.—

A LOUIS SEIZE DRAWING-ROOM—PRIZE DESIGN—BY J. W. BLISS, PROVIDENCE, R. I.